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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 PRISTINA 000683

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SUBJECT: KOSOVO: PRESIDENT SEJDIU ON TROIKA TALKS, ELECTIONS

REF: STATE 126086

Classified By: COM TINA KAIDANOW FOR REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D)

11. (C) SUMMARY: At a September 11 meeting with COM, President Sejdiu agreed that the Kosovar side had to "do better" in the ongoing Troika-led talks and would submit on paper a "Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation between Kosovo and Serbia" at the September 19 meeting in London, as well as an accompanying paper elaborating principles of cooperation already articulated by the Kosovars at the previous Troika meeting. COM encouraged Sejdiu in this and noted that the Unity Team must be prepared to answer tough questions from the Troika, but also urged the President to speed implementation of the Ahtisaari plan to further demonstrate Kosovo's commitment to its Serbs. She also warned Sejdiu that failure to resolve recent high-profile issues aimed against Kosovo Serb interests would only hurt Kosovo's image at this sensitive time. Turning to the November 17 elections, Sejdiu said the Unity Team had agreed he should, in their name, publicly encourage all Kosovars, including minority communities, to take part, and assured COM that the Ahtisaari plan would not be used as a campaign issue. END SUMMARY.

"We will do better"

12. (C) President Sejdiu, at a September 11 meeting with COM, admitted that the Kosovar side had to "do better" at the next Troika-led status talks, scheduled for September 19 in London. He noted that he had told other members of Kosovo's Unity Team (UT) at a meeting earlier in the day that they "cannot perform in the same manner." He promised COM that the UT would present a "Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation Between Kosovo and Serbia" on paper at the London meeting, and would be prepared to answer in detail questions about their vision of Kosovo's future relationship with Serbia. (Note: After the UT meeting today, UT Coordinator Blerim Shala passed us minor edits to our suggested version of the Treaty, which we have given to EUR/SCE. President Sejdiu also told journalists that the UT would present this Treaty at the London meeting, stressing that it was a serious approach to accommodate minorities, especially Kosovo's Serbs. End Note.)

13. (C) COM strongly encouraged Sejdiu to be prepared in London, but also urged him to speed implementation of the Ahtisaari package as a further demonstration of Kosovo's commitment to Kosovo Serbs. COM warned that failure to resolve recent high-profile issues that negatively affected Kosovo Serb interests would only hurt Kosovo's image during the talks. She referred specifically to construction of a supermarket in the Ahtisaari plan's Special Zoning Area (SZA) of Gazimestan -- which includes the most important Serb monument (dedicated to the 1389 Battle of Kosovo). COM also pointed to the Klina municipality's failure to respect a Kosovo Property Agency (KPA) decision in favor of a Kosovo Serb, and the subsequent harassment and intimidation this individual had suffered. Sejdiu said he understood this point and would take "maximum care" to see that these issues were resolved.

Appeal for all to participate in elections

14. (C) Turning to the upcoming November 17 central and local elections, Sejdiu said after the UT meeting he had publicly encouraged all Kosovars, including those of minority communities, to participate (per demarche request reftel). Sejdiu also reiterated several times that the Ahtisaari plan would not be the subject of partisan debate during the election campaign: "We are for achieving independence, but also for implementing the Ahtisaari plan." He added that he planned to invite all party leaders to meet after the parties turn in their candidates lists, due September 12, to foster a tolerant political atmosphere and craft an agreement to prevent any such attacks on Ahtisaari.

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15. (C) Comment: Despite Sejdiu's promise to coach the Unity Team into a better performance in London, we fear the press of elections on members' attention (as well as continuous tensions among some members on the Team) will prevent them from doing a truly solid job. Nevertheless, they have pledged to put down documents for consideration, and they understand the importance of appearing thoughtful and focused on the question of status and its strategic implications. We will continue to emphasize to the President, Prime Minister and other key officials the central role that Ahtisaari implementation plays in this negotiation, as well -- in one hopeful sign, the PISG approved on Tuesday a temporary injunction halting all construction in Special Protection Zones as defined by the Ahtisaari plan, a step that now needs implementation to prove that Kosovar authorities are indeed serious about their commitments. End comment.  
KAIDANOW